

## Little new in answers to Loop 202 questions

[By Doug Murphy](#)

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Last spring the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee asked the city of Phoenix and the Arizona Department of Transportation a lot of questions about what would happen if the South Mountain Loop 202 were built.

This week the committee got the responses.

Except for a high-five from Mayor Phil Gordon and Councilman Greg Stanton, the answers were fairly vague, since much depends on future decisions on where and how the freeway is built.

“As elected officials it has been our position – and our honor – to support your efforts to oppose the proposed Pecos Road alignment of the South Mountain Freeway Loop 202,” responded Gordon and Stanton in a joint letter.

City street department officials expect that if the freeway was built it would probably cut traffic on Chandler Boulevard and other east-west streets, although traffic on the north-south streets – where exits are planned – would increase.

Environmentalists have been unhappy at the thought of the freeway cutting through South Mountain Park and, according to ADOT, there is little that anyone can do to stop it. ADOT said that when it comes to cutting through the park, it is required to look at “reasonable alternatives” and “consider practical and feasible alternatives” to avoiding impact, but that in the end, if cutting through ridges and 32 acres of park land is the best alternative then ADOT must try to “minimize” the impact.

The Loop 202 is not a cure-all for projected traffic congestion ADOT mentioned several times in its response to the Village Planning Committee questions, but it does expect the 10-lane freeway to carry between 135,000 and 190,000 vehicles a day.

In comparison, ADOT figures show that Interstate 10 at Guadalupe Road carried about 205,000 vehicles a day in 2005 and in 2030, would carry about 223,000 vehicles if the Loop 202 were built.

One issue that had been briefly mentioned during the South Mountain Advisory Team meeting has been existing utilities that would have to be moved.

Phoenix alone has 30-inch and 36-inch sewer lines and a 46-inch water line that run parallel to Pecos Road, which would have to be moved north along with smaller sewer and water lines.

It is unclear where the relocated underground utility lines could go or how much it would cost.

The freeway was originally planned in 1985 to connect I-10 in Ahwatukee Foothills, run west, and then cut through South Mountain Park where it would turn north to reconnect to I-10.

In Ahwatukee Foothills about 255 homes are in the right of way, unless the freeway were depressed, in which case twice as many homes would have to be demolished. The freeway would also pass within feet of a half-dozen schools, raising concerns about air quality and safety.

Stanton and others have argued that the 1985 plan needs to be revised to take into account the areas of rapid growth. ADOT formed the Citizens Advisory Team, made up of local people from along the planned path, to help update the plan.

ADOT hopes to have a draft of the environmental impact study ready for public comment next year, with approval of the final draft in late 2008.

The advisory teams meets Aug. 23 to begin looking at the eastern portion of the freeway alignment.

The Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee meets again Aug. 27 when the questions and answer will be on the agenda to discuss.

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